

Public addresses on the Da'wah and Jihad: Between Laxity and Extremism



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May Allah hasten his release

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There are many lessons to be learnt from the life of our Prophet that may be used to enrich the da‘wah and the Jihād, pave the path that lies before the caller and the Mujāhid and allow them to succeed in attaining that which will benefit the da‘wah and Jihād, as well as keep them away from any evils or harmful and corrupt effects.

Anyone who attentively studies and ponders upon this great, fragrant life history – may the best prayers and most complete peace be upon its owner – will know that Allāh the Exalted used to guide His Prophet in a manner that allowed him to select the styles of address, actions, choices and priorities that took the following points into consideration:

- The nature of the addressee with regards his ideological, intellectual, or moral background. This requires that he have knowledge of men, their tribes, and their natures.
- The nature of the addressee with regards his relentlessness to accepting the da‘wah and fighting the religion, or the lack thereof.
- The capacity of the da‘wah and the believing group, or the nature of that particular phase, condition, reality or time period.

This is all done in accordance with the scales of the Sharī‘ah. When the harms and benefits clash, he would observe whatever brought about the greatest benefits and averted the greatest harms, without violating the fixed principles of the Sharī‘ah and the Firmest Handhold and firm pillars of the religion and Tawhīd.

An example of his considering the nature of his addressee, his moral, social or intellectual background, and the virtues and traits the person esteems and loves can be found in the way he addressed his people at the onset of his da‘wah: what Abū Sufyān – back when he was an enemy of the Messenger – said and narrated to Heraclius, the leader of the Romans, when Heraclius asked him: *“What does he order you to do?”* After mentioning the foundation and basis of the Prophet’s address – Tawhīd – Abū Sufyān continued: *“He orders us to pray, give in charity, be truthful, chaste, and to keep good relations.”* Ponder for a moment, the nature of an address powerful enough to root itself into the minds of one’s enemies.

Other hadīths state that the Prophet commanded them to keep their promises, fulfil their trusts, spread love, censure its destruction, and other similar etiquettes upon which everyone is agreed. This was so that he could show the people the good points of the religion, and teach them that he came to perfect the same good manners about which their intelligent and most noble are proud, boast and hold in esteem.

Analogous to this is how he addressed them regarding the Millah of Ibrāhīm – whom the Quraysh honoured and attributed themselves to – and that he and those who believed in him were the most worthy people of Ibrāhīm.

Likewise, the statement of the Prophet to Heraclius in his letter after mentioning Tawhīd, “Accept Islām and you will be safe, and Allāh will double your reward. If you reject this invitation of Islam, the sin of your misguided subjects will be on your head .”

This alerts and informs the subjects of Heraclius’ Kingdom that he cared for their guidance, while also indicating that Heraclius was responsible for their misguidance. This type of address – wherein the Prophets showed that they cared for the guidance of their people and feared for them a great torment – is echoed in the calls of all the Prophets, including that of Nūh to his people: *{“O my people! Worship Allāh! You have no other God but Him. Certainly, I fear for you the torment of a Great Day!”}*

There is no shame in using such words that show how the caller or Mujāhid cares for the guidance of the people, how he wants goodness for them, how he loves to help the weak and oppressed and rid them of the oppression and rule of the tyrants and transgressors over them, or how he cares to spread security, justice and righteousness and to fight oppression, evil and tyranny. By Allāh, no one can be embarrassed of such words and censure them, other than the weak-minded, ignorant of the life of the Prophet and the da‘wah of all the Prophets.

Our religion came to guide all the people, and to remove them from worshipping slaves, to come to worshipping Allāh – the Lord of the slaves – and our Prophet was sent as a mercy to all of mankind.

Such an address does not distort the fundamentals of the religion, dilute its principles, or cajole the disbelievers, but rather it presents a radiant and firm truth from the fixed principles of our religion. The caller must show and clarify it to the people, and there is nothing wrong with focusing on this truth and bringing it to the limelight when addressing disbelievers who love and esteem such qualities.

Analogous to this is what was narrated by al-Bukhārī regarding the story of al-Hudaybiyah, that when a man from Quraysh from Banū Kinānah came to the Prophet and his Companions, he said: *“This is so-and-so and he is from a people who esteem the sacrificial animals, so give them to him”* so they were given to him and he was received by people while they were reciting the talbiyah. When he saw this he said: *“Glorified is Allāh! It is not fair to prevent these people from visiting the Ka‘bah.”* When he returned to his people, he said: *“I saw the sacrificial animals garlanded and marked, so I do not think it is advisable to prevent them from visiting the Ka‘bah...”*

So ponder the Prophet’s knowledge and insight into the general states of people during his time, another example of which is his statement: *{“Belief is among the Yemenites, and unbelief is towards the East; tranquility is among those who rear goats and sheep, and pride and showing off – and in one narration: conceit – are among the uncivil and rude owners of horses and Bedouins,”}* by which he intended to inform his Companions of the situations and background of the people they deal with.

Thus, when he ordered Hassān to satirize the Quraysh, he commanded Hassān to first go to Abū Bakr so he could tell him about them, their battles and their history. Likewise, when he sent Mu'ādh to Yemen the first thing he said to him was: *{“You are going to a people of the Book;”}* so he informed Mu'ādh first of their ideological or cultural background – call it what you may – and then indicated how he should deal with them, what he should prioritize when addressing them, and how to begin calling them.

Ponder all of this and register it in your heart, then ponder how he addressed and dealt with the people according to their intellects, how he took into account what they held in high regard then clearly showed it to them in an Islamic light, as long as it was not contrary to the religion! Be cautious against being too narrow-minded to understand this point, and instead considering it a form of fickleness or flattery – as do the ignorant – for it is reported in al-Bukhārī on the authority of ‘Alī [may Allāh be pleased with him]: *{“Address the people according to their understanding – do you like that Allāh and His Messenger should be belied?”}*

An example of his consideration of whether his addressee is obstinate and at war with the religion, or peaceful and willing to listen, is the way he wisely implemented and acted according to the saying of Allāh the Exalted: *{“Allāh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allāh loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allāh forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers.”}*

And His saying: *{“And argue not with the people of the Scripture, unless it be in [a way] that is better, except with such of them as do wrong.”}*

And analogous to this is the saying of Allāh to Mūsā and Hārūn regarding the first time they would address the tyrant Fir‘awn: *{“And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah.”}*

But when he opposed the clear signs, denied them and was arrogant against them, Mūsā said to him: *{“Verily, you know that these signs have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as clear evidences. And I think you are, indeed, O Fir‘awn doomed to destruction!”}*

So think about how they addressed him in the beginning, and then how he was addressed after displaying his stubbornness.

Also consider how he observed the capacities of the da‘wah and the believers, the nature of the phase they were living in, and the reality of the gradual legislation of the Jihād; the command was initially to hold back, pardon, overlook and turn away from the polytheists and have patience with their harm.

When the believers migrated and found refuge and support, and they were in the beginning stages of establishing their state, they were then permitted to fight in defense and to repel the harm of the polytheists, but it was not yet obligatory upon them.

During this time, he would refrain from fighting anyone whose death would cause more harm to the Muslims. He would sometimes hear how the hypocrites had caused them harm, and his Companions would request his permission to kill them, but he would reply: *{“Leave them, [otherwise] the people will say that Muhammad kills his Companions.”}* Sometimes he would say: *{“Then many noses will flare up for him in Yathrib.”}*

He made covenants and peace treaties with the Jews, and sustained their existing confederacies such that he even contracted them to help him if he went to war. But they would later harm him and say “Rā’inā” which they considered a terrible insult, and they would say: “We hear and let you hear nothing,” and other such words with which he would patiently endure. They would greet him by wishing death upon him, to which he would simply reply, *{“Wa ‘Alaykum [and upon you].”}* He would not confront them, he would not kill them for harming him, and he prohibited his Companions from killing them when some of them asked permission to do so; rather, he would speak to them in a gentle manner. He forbade ‘Ā’ishah [may Allāh be pleased with her] from cursing them in return for their harm, and he would say: *{“Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective.”}* Without a doubt, this is all because he gave consideration to the phase that the Muslim state was in – it was still young and they were still becoming established.

The next command was to repel a transgression with the like of it, and to fight whoever expels the believers from their homes and wealth.

Allāh then strengthened the Muslims at Badr. This was the first stage of their establishment, for it struck the necks of most disbelievers in al-Madīnah and terrorized the rest. During this phase, the Prophet subdued some of the Jews, the death of whom would not cause harm to the Muslims or their state; he ordered the killing of Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf the Tāghūt of the Jews, and others like him. But he did not do this extensively; rather, he sufficed with killing those who harmed him and whose death would not have bad repercussion. When matters became more stabilized for him in al-Madīnah, he expelled some people and killed others, but this was all done only after the Jews betrayed him or broke their treaty with him, and was done to unite the people of al-Madīnah and those new to Islām among them who had a treaty and interests with the Jews. Had he done it at an earlier time without having good reason to from them, it would have caused much anger among them, but his manner of action was from the fiqh and politics of the Wise Sharī’ah; whoever was denied its guidance will go astray and cause the Muslims harm.